

discussed the VA-specific funding that is strengthening access to healthcare for many veterans, and I appreciated the opportunity to hear more about some of the challenges they are facing and how we can do more in the Senate to support them.

Over the last few weeks, I have enjoyed connecting with these Texans virtually, but I was also glad to join Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue for in-person visits with some of the men and women keeping America fed and clothed during this time of increased need. This pandemic has dealt a serious blow to Texas agriculture, and I would dare say to the Presiding Officer; I am sure it is true in her State as well. From livestock to row crops, to dairy, producers have seen their markets shrink and nearly disappear.

Last Thursday, Secretary Perdue, Congressman JOHN CARTER, and I participated in a roundtable in Coupland, TX, to discuss the impact of the pandemic on Texas agriculture. The CARES Act provided \$16 billion in agricultural assistance, and so far Texans have received more than \$300 million to support our producers. I was glad to learn more about how this funding is helping them through these difficult times and learning more about what should be included in the next bill.

Secretary Perdue and I also had the chance to see how two incredible organizations in Texas are keeping families fed. First, we visited the Houston Food Bank, which is the largest food bank in the Nation. Under normal circumstances, the Houston Food Bank and its volunteers provide food to families across 18 counties in Southeast Texas. As the impact of COVID-19 has grown, so has the need for assistance, so much so that our National Guard troops have been lending a hand for months, but this week that will come to an end.

Compared to the same time last year, the Houston Food Bank has seen up to a 171-percent increase in the need for food assistance. In June alone, the Houston Food Bank delivered more than 27 million pounds of food. It was a pleasure to join Secretary Perdue in volunteering for this incredible organization and being able to thank the men and women who are keeping our families fed in person. We were also able to visit one of the homes of the USDA Meals-to-You Program, which provides nutritious meals for low-income students in rural areas across the Nation.

These are two incredible examples of how organizations throughout the State are supporting those who have been hardest hit by the pandemic. Support for our farmers, our ranchers, producers, food banks, and other organizations keeping Texas fed was a big part of the CARES Act, and I hope we will continue to strengthen that support with the next coronavirus response package.

Senator MURPHY and I introduced the SERVE and CARRY Act, which will provide additional opportunities to

help low-income and unemployed Texans access food during the pandemic. It would establish three new programs to not only help put food on the table of Texans in need but also support the farmers, restaurants, and their workers who are suffering as a result of the economic impact of this pandemic.

This legislation has been endorsed by the National and Texas Restaurant Associations, the California and Texas Food Banks, and a number of other anti-hunger organizations. It is time we put our restaurants and their employees back to work in feeding people, and let our men and women in uniform volunteering at the food banks go home to be with their families. The SERVE and CARRY Act will do just that, and I urge my colleagues to look at it and hopefully support it.

As we dive into discussions on the next coronavirus response package, the feedback and ideas provided by these Texans during this last 2 weeks could not have been more timely. I want to thank each of them for taking the time to share their ideas and feedback with me. I come back to Washington with fresh ideas, and I am eager to get to work so we can provide additional support for the Texans who have been impacted so dramatically by this virus.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Madam President, on another matter, before the Senate begins consideration of the next coronavirus response package, we will finish our work on the National Defense Authorization Act. If we are able to get this bill to the President's desk, which I hope we will, it will mark the 60th consecutive year in which Congress has passed bipartisan legislation to fund and support our Nation's military.

Each year, this is how we maintain our military bases, modernize our equipment, and invest in the next generation of weaponry. It is how we strengthen our relationships with old allies and forge new partnerships with new ones. It is how we take stock of the global threat landscape and ensure our troops have the training, equipment, and resources to counter even our most aggressive adversaries.

In recent years, China and Russia have emerged as two of the greatest threats to the world order. China, in particular, has been increasingly belligerent and well resourced and continues to demonstrate a lack of respect not only for the United States and our closest allies but for basic human rights.

A few weeks ago, China moved quickly and under a veil of secrecy to pass a law taking aim at the freedoms and autonomy of Hong Kong. What they are calling a national security law is nothing more than an effort to extinguish opposition to the Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong. They are using this law to silence protesters and prescribe harsh penalties for those who have the temerity to speak out against the Communist Party. While devastating, this is certainly not sur-

prising, given China's repeated human rights violations.

The Chinese Communist Party continues its disturbing ethnic cleansing campaign against the Uighur people. The so-called political reeducation camps are nothing more than detention camps where the Uighurs are tortured. Recent reporting found that the treatment in these camps often includes forced abortions, birth control, and sterilizations. I have spoken and will continue to speak out against the methods and motivations of the Chinese Government, operating through the Communist Party, to disrupt the world order.

China does not stand alone as one of the great threats facing our country today. Russia has become increasingly aggressive with its efforts to wreak chaos and sow discord. Since their attempts to interfere with the 2016 election, we have witnessed aggression after aggression by Russia. From Russia-backed mercenaries fighting in the Middle East to state-launched cyber attacks targeting banks and energy firms, to its hybrid warfare and assassination campaigns in Europe, Russia continues to undermine the United States and our allies.

Just last week, we learned that Russian hackers have attempted to steal coronavirus vaccine research. It is becoming increasingly clear that China and Russia adhere to no rules and no principles but their own. As the national defense strategy outlined, the threats posed by China and Russia are only growing more important by the day, and countering these threats requires a clear and concerted effort from Congress and the U.S. Government.

That is precisely why passing a strong Defense authorization bill is so important. This legislation prioritizes strategic competition with China and Russia and takes a strong approach to counter the threats posed by adversaries around the world. It will build on the progress we have made in recent years to strengthen our military and achieve peace through strength.

As we work to counter increasingly sophisticated adversaries around the world, I am glad Congress has taken the opportunity to deliver on one of our most critical responsibilities and pass the NDAA, which we will this week.

I thank Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED for working to get this bill passed with broad bipartisan support, and the provisions will prepare our military for the threats both of today and of tomorrow.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

INTERNET VIRUS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, it has been so wonderful to be in Tennessee over the past couple of weeks and to have the opportunity to listen to Tennesseans. We have listened and talked to local elected officials and teachers and parents from one corner of the State to another. They are very aware and are truly focused on the challenges we are going to be facing this fall in just a few weeks.

Some of our school systems in Tennessee are going to be going back to school the first week of August. They have a lot of questions as to whether they are going to end up with classes meeting in person or online.

Up until now, students have relied on virtual schooling platforms to stay connected to their teachers, and it is likely that in many communities, this system will continue at least through the fall semester.

Relying on Google and other educational software providers keeps teachers and families safe from COVID-19, but these programs come with their own brand of hazards. Our increased reliance on Big Tech has highlighted just how vulnerable we are when things go awry. Even the platforms that have become commonplace over the years pose risks and not only just risks to children. You need look no further than last week's Twitter meltdown for evidence of how quickly a hacker or even an insider can turn a few tweets into a threat.

I will tell you this: In Tennessee, we have a lot of security moms. Those security moms you hear so much about are really back in full force. They are concerned. They are paying close attention, and they are not going to back off of the Googles and the Facebooks and the Instagrams. They want to see these companies held accountable and transparent about how they follow and use data because when they see their children spending hours staring at TikTok or YouTube, they are beginning to see and fear a vulnerability. When they see their children using their classroom software, they begin to see and fear a vulnerability.

They haven't forgotten that back in 2015, the Electronic Frontier Foundation filed a complaint with the FTC against Google alleging that their Google for Education platform was exploiting students' personal information and potentially exposing it to third parties. A 2017 report confirmed and expanded on these concerns.

These programs have continued, but Big Tech has left parents with more questions than answers about what is happening with their children's data. How are they pulling in this information? How are they tracking these children? What are they doing with the Chromebook in schools program? Who has this information on their children, and what are they doing with it? What kinds of files are they building about our children?

You know, I have said that one of the questions we should ask and work until

we can find an answer is, Who owns the virtual you? Who owns it? Because the virtual you is you and your information online. It is you and your presence online. This is what parents fear.

I will tell you, that fear is complicated because of the rise in mandatory use of technology by students. It has prompted me, along with several of our colleagues here, to ask the FTC to launch a major investigation into how these platforms protect student privacy. That is the question they have to answer. Are you protecting it? If not, why not? If not, are you selling it to the highest bidder? Are you profiting from this educational information?

These security moms know it is not just their kids' safety and privacy at risk. They do their banking online, their shopping online, and they have had to deal with the nightmare of having their identity stolen during one of the many infamous retail hacks.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Madam President, they also know that these risks aren't just a domestic problem. They have seen bombshell reports about consumer data flowing freely between popular apps and servers in China—of course, China. They have heard about how Chinese companies, all beholden to the Chinese Communist Party—again, as I say so often to American businesses, if you are in business with a company in China, you are in business with the Chinese Communist Party. They know that these companies—all beholden to the Chinese Communist Party—steal intellectual property, build vulnerabilities into their hardware, and tempt tech junkies with flashy mobile apps.

The entanglement doesn't end there. I have spoken on multiple occasions about the clear danger posed by our stifling and overly permissive relationship with China.

We have a duty to address the threats we have uncovered so far and anticipate future problems before they reach our shores. This year's national defense authorization legislation does this by targeting problems in both the public and private sectors.

We know and have known for some time that the agenda of the Chinese Communist Party poses an existential threat to the West. This year's NDAA includes funding and other resources for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which is a comprehensive strategy focused on confronting Beijing's influence on other countries and maintaining a U.S. and allied presence in the region. We also authorized a pilot program that will allow cyber specialists from the National Guard to participate in information sharing and analysis between Federal, State, and local officials.

We can use our military and our allies to control a threat that lives half a world away, but how do we stop that threat from reaching our shores?

Back in March, I worked with Senator MENENDEZ to introduce the bipartisan SAM-C Act to secure our phar-

maceutical supply chain and protect American consumers from shady Chinese manufacturers. In this year's NDAA, I expanded on that idea and fought for language that will require a percentage of what we call critical technologies to be assembled in the United States or by a close ally.

We are also going to invest even more in machine and advanced manufacturing research at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Scientists at Oak Ridge will work directly with researchers at the University of Tennessee to develop new technology that will make American companies more competitive.

I will tell you that the University of Tennessee and Oak Ridge Institute are a wonderful partnership. As we work toward 21st-century capabilities for warfare, this is exactly the type of partnership we need to see more of.

Being from Tennessee, which is home to multiple military installations, I know that national defense starts and ends at home, so I secured increased funding that is desperately needed to repair and update Army deployment infrastructure. I know that my friends at Fort Campbell will be able to put that to good use on their runway ramps.

The Defense bill will also fully fund new mission-essential aircraft, including 47 Chinook helicopters for our posts in Tennessee and technologies that will allow those famous Reapers to one day be stationed in the Volunteer State.

We are also finally going to secure some properly fitting body armor for servicewomen, which unbelievably is still unheard of in 2020.

We will likely spend the rest of this week hashing out the finer details of the NDAA before we bring up the final bill for a vote. I encourage my colleagues to consider just how interconnected we are with both our allies and our adversaries. I want them to think about the great power competition and the threats that exist from China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran—I call those four the new axis of evil. I would encourage them to remember that the threats we face require action at every single level, whether they surface at home or half a world away.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOOZMAN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I rise today in support of the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

Congress has a constitutional duty under article I, section 8, to provide for the common defense, and the NDAA is one of the key tools that we have to ensure that the United States is capable of defending ourselves and our interests.